

Falade Femi Adetola

Femlex1@gmail.com

+2348067342381

**An Evaluation of
Total Independence
Of Nigeria: The
Laxity Of Her
Languages.**

Abstract

The enunciation of Nigeria's independence as a semi-fable is no longer novelty. Countless number of articles has for decades enjoyed unfolding the hele of the literatures that summed up these linkable events. Indubitably, enormous factor has been equally located and allocated to the genuineness of the saga and most researchers have ferociously articulated the fact and figures of the unbewised political matrimony of the various regions and ethnics of the country. To therefore investigate into such blee or review such succulent tome of independent might, of sincerity, refer to extravagante. This paper will polishably investigate into independence of the Nigeria languages with her independent on October 1st, 1960. It will consciously avoid a repetition of some unimportant issue as its focus shall be on the assessment of Nigerian true independent in area of her ethnicity-divergence languages.

Key Words: Semi-fable, Novelty, Saga, Political Matrimony, Language

Introduction

The understanding of Language; being a crucial feature of any culture have an inseparable relationship with this discourse is principally fundamental. It is a human social phenomenon utilized by people in their everyday life. Of course, the kernel of a language in a society can not be underrated. It is not, per se an abstract construction of the learned, or of dictionary makers, but is something arising out of the work, needs, ties, joys, affections, and tastes of long generations of humanity, Victoria, et al (2007: 407).¹ It is not arguable that language is an instrument of communication; an identity of a society. Eminent Greenberg (1971: 156) also asserted that "Language is unique to man. No other species possesses a truly symbolic Means of communication and no human society, however simple its material Culture, lacks the basic human heritage of a well developed language".² Language also enjoy critical definition from Noam Chomsky who defines language, as a particular set of sentences that can be generated from a particular set of rules.³ The above definitions have passed some lessons on what language entails, hence plating a line for this brilliant discourse. However, it is sacrosanct to know that language and society exist side by side, without language there will be no society as in the case of Nigeria; it serves as a binding force, binding the people of the country together as one.

The study of language theory might perhaps not too relevant in this vein. However, it is important to call that the Summation of Nigerian local languages listed for Nigeria is 521, out of those 510 are active languages, 2 are second language without mother tongue speakers, and 9 are extinct. Nigeria being a country with over 250 ethnic groups in it has different languages co-existing in it. In some areas, some ethnic group speaks more than one language; such areas will be referred to as a multilingual society, which then makes Nigeria a multilingual country. The chief languages spoken in Nigeria include Hausa, Yoruba, Fulfulde, Karnuri, Ibo.⁴

Among other Africa countries that endured political agonies from their political masters around the late nineteenth century, Nigeria was one of the many that bagged their independence in the 1960s especially in West Africa. Precisely, Nigeria gained her independent on October 1st 1960. This independence was first seen as paramount as it was claimed to be because of the long agitation for it. This fact was one of the numerous reasons that created enormous holes in the totality of independent substances in the country.⁵ Most of these holes have now called for a nippy revisitation for thinkable remedies. Of course, some of them gaze inevitable and irreversible. The places of Language, Education,

Ethnicity, Politics and Religion among others are more significant and need ardent evaluation. By positing ardent evaluation, is not to claim that several scholars in the field of politics or political history and other interested writers who have presented us with learnable critiques from such facet have not aptly delivered our elation prospect. It is only to prove that, though such works had penetrated little longer to stop or reduce the erroneous repetition of such view, it has not caused it complete transformation.

The works of Nike L. Edun Adebisi "Radical Nationalism in British West Africa, 1945-60", a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for his degree of Doctor of Philosophy (History) in The University of Michigan in 2008, dealt with such view in a minute way. The research work of P. A. Ezema titled "The English Language, Politics and the Issues of Multi- Ethnicity in Nigeria, showed the role of English languages in Nigeria political running but does not suggest it elimination. Shaibu Sunday Danladi also submitted an Article on "Language policy: Nigeria and the role of English language in the 21st century".⁶ This article examines the role of English in Nigeria as a medium of communication, political activities-social and academic guidance from its historical perspective, and the duration of gradual transition to the present status of bilingualism and its democratization of language in conformity with national unification. It shows how English occupied an influential role in the formation of the national expectations and integration of the Nigerian nation through its "official language" status.⁷ These works have been seen as sacrosanct to the development of the language and have not in one time or the other suggest a durable remedy.

This paper though may be seen as too predisposition and Nigerian in nature will suggest certain measures that will, with alacrities propel gradual elimination of the system. The reason for such gradual elimination is because the language was not introduced suddenly rather it took a long process before it was adopted and will also take probable same time to eradicate if the measure could be employed. Well, I have not seen impossibility in such restoration as some people had thought. Some who had thought in that bearing have investigated into the intimate relationship between the former colonial master and Nigeria, beside trade relations and diplomatic political and economical benefits. To reason in such trend might mien hopelessness and lead to total lost of self-dignity especially in this cultural elginism generation. Such benefit and friendly relation can still be sustained with the drill of unpretentious sagacity.⁸

Unhistorically and excruciating, the exact date that English language usage started in Nigeria could not be identified. However, it is believed that the first intimate contact between the British and some ethnic groupings in Nigeria was in Southern Nigeria. This must have been at some period before the Atlantic slave trade. It is on records that as from 1553 English men paid frequent visits to the Nigerian shores, especially the ports of Ancient Benin and old Calabar, and the type of communication which evolved between the English men and the Nigerians was a simplified kind of communication in English called Pidgin.¹⁰ To be factual, the missionary activities in Nigeria led to the abolition of slave trade in West African regions. It was however reported that the abolition of this illegal

trading many Nigerian taken away on slavery returned to Nigeria and other West African sub-regions.) that is, some of these Nigerians particularly the Yorubas locally known as 'Akus' in Sierra Leone, returned and settled in Lagos and Abeokuta where they were known as Saros and Krios, and they freely used the English language in their new settlements.⁹ The need to develop and exalt Nigeria indigenous languages must have been responsible for a national language, and this undoubtable, must have given birth to a national language: English which have been mutually accepted by the people of the country since independent. Nigerian English should be regarded as a dialect or a group of distinct form of a language devoid of any perforate connotation of inferiority usually attached to the world.¹⁰ Apart from the English language, Pidgin English, though unofficial, also dominates a larger part of Nigeria population. Pidgin English is generally used in Nigeria by the non-sophisticated class to relate with other people. This class of people is not competent enough in the use of Standard English; as such they have to simplify the complex structure of English so that they can interact in English. It is assumable that English has been the only official and generally acceptable language in Nigeria. It is the only language that has spread aggressively breaking every ethnic and language barriers. There is hardly anywhere in Nigeria that one will not find someone who can speak English, at least the Pidgin English. Regrettably, the dominance of English language in some parts of Nigeria now seems uncontrollable. For instant, ethnic groups in the South-South Nigeria have lost their indigenous languages in the children coming up can no longer trace or speak their mother tongue any longer.¹¹

It is foreknowable that there are many types of English in Nigeria in the same way as we have local languages. There are varieties of classification of Nigeria English and the tediousness lies in diverse choices. For instance, we have Brosnaham's Classification, Banjo's Classification, Bamgbose's Classification, Awonusi's Classification, The Acrolectal Nigerian English, The Mesolectal Nigerian English, The Basilectal Nigerian English and so on.¹² From the foregoing one may be posed with the question of "how independent is Nigeria independent without the complete and official adoption of indigenous languages or with a foreign or colonial language"? I hope the answer would not remain for unity purpose.

The challenges facing the question of true independent in Nigeria are not far fetched. Truthfully by an act of the British Parliament, Nigeria became an independent country within the Commonwealth on October 1, 1960, but is this really the case in the place of language? The concept of independent will offer a resounding help in talking such question. According to different dictionaries of English language, Independent means to be free from outside control; not depending on another for livelihood; not influenced or controlled by other in matters, opinion, conduct and so on. Political independent can be seen then, to be a total freedom of actions on political issues. Of important is the fact that

political issue cannot be addressed in isolation of socioeconomic issues. Hence, it is wrongly right to proclaim a country independent when her cultural valve is still held captive. From the position given above, it is obvious that political independent does not guarantee automatic cultural emancipation, especially a crucial element of culture like language. Like others have claimed, this does not at all glorify the country political heritage in factual. The use of English as a language of education, employment, legislation, media and admission placement in schools led to the infiltration of English and European literature in the Nigerian intelligentsia. This later had effect on the British government as Nigerians became familiar with western ideas, culture, values and ideals like democracy, freedom, enlightenment, fundamental human right, self determination and independence.¹³ Consequently, Nigeria independent does not reflect in her language, and how this can be checked will be supplied in the recommendation part of this article.

There are in fact, numbers of factors that led to the promotion of English language in Nigeria and this need to be noted. These factors ranges from language policy as introduced by the colonial administration and adopted by Nigeria after gaining its political independence; its usage in the Nigerian media; external relation, in courts, in most published books; in commerce and industry; in government ministries, parastatals and corporations; in the propagation of education in Nigeria and its uses in all facets of the country economy and non-economy sector. In short, the Linguistic consequences of English in Nigeria are numerous and they have to do with such phenomena as multilingualism, variants of English, anglicisation of indigenous lexical items and importation of loan words from English into the indigenous languages. It has also succeeded in creating a legion of multilingualism. Multilingualism is a situation whereby people in a speech community speak more than two languages, and also left us in the uncontrollable hand of code variation. Code variation refers to instances that Nigerian speakers of English as a second language code - switch or code - mix at intervals when engaged in discourse.¹⁴

Recommendations

This paper will ethically be a waste of time or an expression of grandiosity without an elucidating recommendation therefore, paved the way for the following recommendations.

Noteworthy, the main indigenous languages should be made official. These languages are Yoruba, Hausa and Ibo. Well, this might propel question of dichotomy in the organized system. It is important to note that this cause would result in more unity as the fact below will contribute to its sustainability.

The requirement of at least one of the indigenous languages mentioned above should be made mandatory for any job opportunity, whether in the public or any sector of the

economy. The ability to speak one of these indigenous dialects plus English language should be the major requirement. The kind of vocation or profession one engages in may have mostly determined the type or variety of language to be used, this should no longer be the case.

Again, these main indigenous languages should be thought in schools, from primary schools to higher education. The subject should be compulsory in primary and secondary schools in the country and the study should be monitored especially in private schools. In higher education, such as universities, Polytechnics and other higher institutions of learning. The subject should be made compulsory as part of General Studies Units. All Nigerian universities always offer the 'communication in English as a course in the general studies unit and in fact in the first year or/and second year, These indigenous languages should also be given the same opportunity.

Subsequently, The English language serves as a basic necessity before one can be admitted into any tertiary institution in Nigeria. The number of people who want to enter schools is too many that the schools have to sift the admissible candidates through effective use of English as this is the dominant language of instruction in schools. It is obvious that in all the levels of education in Nigeria, the English language is the most widely used language of instructions in schools. This has been given backing by the Nigerian Educational Policy (1977) which makes it mandatory for the English language to be the only language of instructions in our schools especially at the secondary and the tertiary levels. This method should be reviewed. At least one indigenous language should be made compulsory, if possible the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination should be increase to five as contrary to the four subjects. This I believe will go longer way to help the transitional process.

The English language is the language of government in Nigeria because almost all the transactions in government offices are carried out in the English language. Minutes, official correspondences, memoranda, circulars, instructions and directives are given out in the English language. Proceedings of meetings are written and conducted in English in government offices. Most government protocol and propaganda are carried out in English. This layout need be redefined. The use of Indigenous languages should be made use in every public or official (government) occasions.

The problems of language can be uprooted from the constitution itself. There should be constitutional review of language section in the country constitution. There must be the use or and the interpretation of English language in any social gathering. The Nigeria constitution Section 21 subsection a and b vowed to protect, preserve, and promote Nigeria

Culture¹⁵..... this promise should be held to because, as pointed in the introduction of this paper, language is a crucial part of any culture.

Conclusion

This paper has served the reader with fascinating homily. The motherlode of the discourse pelted around the need for passionate criticism of Nigeria true independent in seclusion of her apposite ethnic languages. Of course, it has been observed that those who are proficient in the use of English are respected and are accorded a place in the society; good command of English is seen in Nigerian society today as a sign of good education and anyone who does not speak the language is not respected as he is regarded as uneducated. This notion should be corrected through indigenous sensitization programs and it should be corrected among the numerous sectors of the economy. Language use is essential in a proper communication and this fact should not serve as hindrances to an enjoyable communication among the ethnics groups of the country. The use of English language as an official language in Nigeria should not be seen however nemesis. It should rather be seen as acquaintance which needs to apprehend our ideology and rights in our own land. Historically, the use of English language was effect through castigation of our indigenous languages, through force and illusory entertainments. This fact was noted by Abu Boahen (1966).¹⁶ It is true that we lost our precious indigenous languages at independent due to our lackadaisical and insulated political ideology that neglected our cultural and economic values. The junction we are now is the dead-on pivot to redecide on what to do next.

References and Notes

1. Victoria, F. et al (2007). An Introduction to Language.
2. Greenberg (1971: 156)
3. Noam Chomsky
4. P. A. Ezema, The English Language, Politics and the Issues of Multi- Ethnicity in Nigeria. International Journal of Research in Arts and Social Sciences (IJRASS)
5. Library of Congress – Federal Research Division Country Profile: Nigeria, July 2008
6. Ibids, see also Nike L. Edun Adebisi “Radical Nationalism in British West Africa, 1945-60”, a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for his degree of Doctor of Philosophy (History) in The University of Michigan in 2008. And Shaibu Sunday Danladi, “Language policy: Nigeria and the role of English language in the 21st century”.
7. Ibid
8. The position is not to castigate any scholar who must have presented a contrary view; it is again not an avenue to dirty the cordial relationship between Nigeria and Britain. The relationship will be more strengthened by employing the measures that shall be recommended.

9. Awonusi V.O. *"The Identification of Structures within Institutionalised Non-Native Englishes: The Nigerian English Experiences"* in *Lagos Review of English Studies (LARES)* Vol ix, pp. 47-63.
10. Adetugbo, A. (1977), *"Nigerian English: Fact or Fiction?"* in *Lagos Notes and Records*, Vol VI, pp. 128-141.
11. Course Guide to The English Language In Nigeria (ENG353) National Open University Of Nigeria. Written By Mfon Brownson Ekpe. pp
12. Ibid
13. Ibids
14. Ibids
15. See Nigerian Constitution 1999.
16. Abu Boahen, *Topics in West African History*, U.K: Longman Group Limited, pp. 146-155